

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

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Dr. Gabriele Ehrlich
Department of Microbiology or Ophthalmology
Columbia Univ. College of Physicians and Surgeons
New York, N.Y. 10032

Dear Dr. Ehrlich:

This letter concerns Harriett Taylor (Ephrussi); and you need not take any further time about it if you do not recall her well. I am trying to locate her associates, in the period 1943-1945, in whom she might have confided about her intellectual interests in contemporary work on DNA, which eventuated in her working with Avery. Of course now she, Avery, Francis Ryan, Heinrich Waelsch and many others who could have filled in this picture, are gone. I do not recall whether I may have met you at some time past. I am taking some presumptuous initiative in writing you on the strength of your coauthorship of a paper on plasmal assay (JBC 173:547 1948), which is a hint, though scarcely proof, that you may have talked to her about her wider interests. I am not even sure I can recall exactly just when she was working at P&S; I suspect it was in the fall of 1944 -- or was it a year later?

The instance for this inquiry is a memoir I am writing about the intellectual climate at Columbia, 1944-45 that led to the discovery of genetic recombination in bacteria in 1946. It was Harriett who pointed out Avery's paper to me, in January 1945, and I am trying now to trace something of how and when she had learned of this work, what she made of it, and the steps she took to prepare herself to work with Avery and to join his lab. So anything you might recall about the nature and development of her own interest in this would be useful, and I would very much appreciate your sending me a note on it.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg